Department of State

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ACTION OCS-06

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INFO OCT-00 ADS-00 AMAD-01 /007 W

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R 041902Z FEB 82
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7738

UNCLAS SAN SALVADOR 0925

E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: CASC (SULLIVAN, JOHN J.)
SUBJECT: W/W JOHN J. SULLIVAN

REF: STATE 029697

1. POST HAS FORWARDED LETTER REQUESTED IN REFTEL TO DEPARTMENT.
HINTON

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY _____ DATE MAR 1 5 1984
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE _____
TS AUTH. _____ REASON(S) _____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☐ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS _____

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EL SALVADOR REPORT

DECLASSIFIED 159

E. Marlows

R

Period Covered

I arrived in San Salvador the evening of Feb. 1 and departed early in the morning of Feb. 3.

2/10 Alec to draft ltr to Rambeau from James EM

The Sullivan Case

This case occupied most of my time while I was in San Salvador. Consul George Lannon and I had several discussions the evening of my arrival and the following morning on the various aspects of the case and on some prior problems in communications between his office and mine. I believe as a result of these discussions we both have a better understanding of each other's situation and that any further problems will be minimal. He showed me the fourth letter which had just been received, and which obviously is a poison pen letter aimed at getting the two individuals named in the letter in trouble with the authorities. The writer obviously has no real knowledge of Sullivan or his whereabouts. He indicated this information, however, had already been relayed to Washington and was being passed on to the family.

I discussed with him the eight points that the Sullivan sisters had asked me to raise during my trip. The following are the Embassy's comments on these issues.

1. As we have pointed out to the Sullivans in the past, there are no active steps the Embassy can reasonably take to reach the author of either or both of the first two letters. The most logical approach is already being followed, namely to run the ad and to make it as easy as possible for whoever might contact the Embassy. Lannon assured me that there was a scenario in place that would steer any such individual to him quietly and promptly.

2. Consul Lannon explained that the police chief's names was actually Lopez Nuila, and that he is head of the National Police but has no jurisdiction over the Hacienda Police. George pointed out that although the letters' existence have been made public, the fact that they accuse the Hacienda Police has not been released. The Embassy believes that it is best this not be done as long as there was any chance of the letters having validity. Regarding the current investigation, Lanin explained that although the police are not closing the case, and the Embassy constantly reminds them

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3. The Embassy has no reason to believe that the Assistant Manager of the Sheraton, or for that matter anyone working at the Sheraton at the time, was involved in any conspiracy involving John.

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Given the habits of many newsmen in San Salvador, it is likely that the Assistant Manager did not think it all that strange that John Sullivan had not used his room, and was probably as much concerned about being stuck with the bill as he was about the welfare of Sullivan when he finally talked to Col. Bosch.

4. The Embasy has no knowledge of any statement made by President Duarte to former U.S. Ambassador Rivas-Gallant. They believe that if such a statement was made, it's possible it was made in the early weeks of the disappearance and was more of an off-hand comment than a statement based on any specific knowledge.

5. The Embassy, as of the date of my visit, had finished checking the records regarding disposition of remains as outlined in the third letter, and had already spoken with the mayor and justice of the peace named in the letter. No positive information developed, and this information has already been relayed to the family.

6. Item six deals with the individual who contacted the Embassy in Tegucigalpa, alleging to be the writer of, or at least connected with, the first letter. This item still is being pursued by EMR.

7. As we have explained to the family in the past, there is no practical way of verifying the claims that John Sullivan wrote unspecified words on a cell wall of the Hacienda Police. The Hacienda Police have several cells or cell blocks in the area. There are numerous cells in the main Hacienda headquarters and there would be no way of knowing if we had seen every cell or that information had not been removed prior to our visiting.

8. The Embasy briefed the International Red Cross on Sullivan's disappearance. The Embassy does not believe the letters should be turned over to the Red Cross. They believe this would only result in leakage of the contents of the letters. They also point out that the International Red Cross tend to contact mainly the poor and not particularly with the Government or the radicalized left in San Salvador.

Country Team Meeting

I attended the country team meeting chaired by Amb. Hinton. During the course of the meeting I introduced myself briefly, indicated that the Sullivan case was my prime [illegible]

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Country Team Meeting

I attended the country team meeting chaired by Amb. Hinton. During the course of the meeting I introduced myself briefly, indicated that the Sullivan case was my prime reason for visiting El Salvador. Amb. Hinton stated that although the temptation was sometimes overwhelming to simply point out to the family the hopelessness of the situation, he and the Embassy understood that this could not be done and they would continue to do everything possible to resolve the case.

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Meeting with DCM Bleakley:

Consul Lannon and I met with Ken Bleakley, the DCM, for about half an hour. We discussed the Sullivan case and the importance of rapid communications between the Embassy and the Department. The DCM pointed out the importance of our communicating by telegrams so there would be a clear record of the information exchanged, and I indicated that I not only agreed but that this process was already underway. We had had a brief discussion on the status of the murder of the nuns and he indicated that the current problem was their need to secure funds from the Department to contract a good lawyer to help the Embassy pursue the issue through the courts.

Visit to Playon

Consul Lannon and I travelled in an Embassy car, with an armed guard, to Playon, the area outside of San Salvador mentioned in the second letter as the place where John Sullivan's body had been dumped. Basically Playon is a huge area, perhaps several hundred acres, of lava flow. The terrain, particularly with the lava flowing in literally thousands of small hills and valleys, make it an area where a body could be dumped and not spotted 20 feet away. Although there were no bodies in evidence at the time that we made the trip, I was able to see areas that had been bulldozed over, presumably to quickly dispose of whatever remains had been left by the scavengers in the area. It is obvious that it would be impossible to locate and identify a body and dumped there.

Meeting with Consular Staff

I did have a brief meeting with Lannon and the two vice consuls just to discuss overall CA priorities, the immigration package, the NIV waiver bill, etc. I also explained to the vice consuls in response to their quesitons exactly why the Sullivan case was important and why it was necessary to keep pursuing it avidly and to provide prompt, detailed reporting. During that same meeting we also discussed some nuts and bolts issues.

DECLASSIFIED 1/27/82

E.M. Please prepare a reply for my signature by [illegible]

TO: Jim Ward
FROM: Donna Igoe, Debby Indrieri
SUBJECT: Points of Inquiry for Trip to El Salvador

Following our meeting with you and Ambassador Asencio this morning, we composed the following questions which we would like to have looked into:

1) What pro-active measures can the embassy take to reach the person who wrote either or both of the first two letters?

2) Has Police Chief Aguila (sic) inquired with the embassy concerning the letters? In view of the fact that the allegations pertain to illegal acts performed by those working for Aguila, shouldn't an independent investigator be assigned? What is the assessment of the aggressiveness with which Aguila is conducting the investigation?

3) Although the Assistant Manager of the Sheraton (Gomez) was alerted about John not using his room for several days, he did not check the room until after the two labor men were murdered, even though the American military attache, Col. Bosch, was in residence at the hotel. Has the possibility of Gomez' involvement in a conspiracy been looked into?

4) Is it true that President Duarte at one point assured Ambassador Rivas-Gallant that John was in the El Salvador hills writing a book?

5) What progress is being made in checking with the Mayor and the Justice of the Peace on the third letter? Since they would seem to have no inherent motive to tell what they know, what can the embassy offer in return for information?

6) What is the status of the consideration by the embassy in Honduras of pressing charges against the man who contacted them?

7) What is the status of the attempt to check the Hacienda jail cells for verification of the information in the first letter?

8) Has the International Red Cross been informally contacted about the letters as to whether or not they have come across anything that would verify these letters? If not, can this be done? (It seems they should at least have copies of the letters, in case they might come across anything in the future.)

cc: Ambassador Asencio